

**HARPENDEN
URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL**

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH
AND
SANITARY INSPECTOR

For the Year 1947

ST. ALBANS :

PRINTED BY H. A. RICHARDSON, LTD., 5 HIGH STREET.

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PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT STAFF.

1947.

Medical Officer of Health.

CHARLES L. ELDER, M.B., Ch.B., D.P.H.,
March 1st to November 30th.

Sanitary Inspector and Housing Manager.

ERIC R. R. MENGHAM, C.S.I.B., M.R.S.I., M.S.I.A.,
Certified Meat and other Foods Inspector.

Pupil Sanitary Inspector and Clerk.

JOHN S. GEE, A.R.I.P.H.H.

HARPENDEN URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

Public Health and Housing Department,
Harpenden Hall,
Harpenden,

August, 1948.

To the Chairman and Members of the
Harpenden Urban District Council.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to submit the Annual Report upon the health of the district and the work of the Public Health Department for the year 1947.

Dr. C. L. Elder, M.B., Ch.B., D.P.H., commenced duties at Harpenden on March 1st, and before that date Dr. G. A. Ross, M.B., Ch.B., of 19 Station Road, Harpenden, had acted as Medical Officer of Health in an honorary capacity.

Upon the resignation of Dr. Elder on November 30th, an arrangement was made with the Hertfordshire County Council whereby Dr. M. H. Kennaway, M.B., Ch.B., D.P.H., acted as Medical Officer of Health until a new appointment was made.

There is therefore no comment upon the medical statistics and the Report is confined in the main to details of the sanitary administration of the district during the year.

I am,

Your obedient servant,

ERIC R. R. MENGHAM,
Sanitary Inspector and Housing Manager.

SECTION A.**STATISTICS.****(1) General.**

Area, 3,157 acres.

Population (estimated) 13,940 at 30th June, 1947.

Rateable Value, £133,722.

Sum represented by Penny Rate, £595 (estimated).

(2) Vital.

	Birth Rate per 1000 Population	Death Rate per 1000 Population	Deaths under 1 Year per 1000 Births
England and Wales	20·5	12·0	41
126 County Boroughs and Great Towns including London	23·3	13·0	47
148 Smaller Towns (1931 Census 25,000 to 50,000)	22·2	11·9	36
London	22·7	12·8	37
Harpenden	17·6	10·7	53

(3) Mortality Table.

CAUSES OF DEATH.	Males.	Females.	Total.
Typhoid and Paratyphoid Fever
Diphtheria
Tuberculosis of Respiratory System	1	1	2
Other forms of Tuberculosis
Syphilitic Diseases
Influenza
Measles
Encephalitis lethargica
Cancer	10	16	26
Intracranial Vascular lesions ...	5	13	18
Heart Disease	27	19	46
Other Circulatory Diseases ...	4	5	9
Bronchitis	1	2	3
Pneumonia	4	6	10
Other Respiratory Diseases ...	2	1	3
Ulcer of Stomach or Duodenum	2	2
Diarrhœa, &c. (under 2 years) ...	2	...	2
Appendicitis
Other Digestive Diseases ..	1	2	3
Nephritis	4	1	5
Puerperal Sepsis, &c.
Premature Birth	1	1	2
Congenital Malformation	3	3	6
Suicide
Accidents
Other Violent Causes... ..	2	2	4
Cerebrospinal Fever
Whooping Cough
Scarlet Fever
Diabetes...
All other Causes	1	7	8
All Causes... ..	68	81	149

(4) Infant Mortality.

There were 13 deaths of infants under one year. 2 were due to Premature Birth, 6 to Congenital Defects, 1 to Diarrhœa and 4 Stillbirths.

SECTION B.**PREVALENCE OF, AND CONTROL OVER,
INFECTIOUS AND OTHER DISEASES.****(1) Notifiable Diseases.**

DISEASES.	Cases Notified.	Cases admitted to Hospital
Diphtheria	2	1
Scarlet Fever	18	9
Pneumonia	4	...
Erysipelas	2	2
Amoebic Dysentery	1	1
Whooping Cough	3	...
Measles	55	1
Jaundice/Hepatitis	2	...
Poliomyelitis... ..	4	2
Undulant Fever	1	1
Gastro-Enteritis	1	1
Puerperal Pyrexia	1	1
Pulmonary T.B.	16	...
Non-Pulmonary T.B.	2	...
Total	112	19

(2) Tuberculosis.

Age Periods.	New Cases.				Deaths.			
	Pulmonary		Non-Pulmonary		Pulmonary		Non-Pulmonary	
	M	F.	M	F.	M	F.	M	F.
1
5	1
10
15	1
20	1
25	5	2	1	1
35	1	3
45	2	1
55
65	1
Totals ...	11	5	1	1	1	1

(3) Diphtheria Immunisation.

During 1947, 166 children were immunised against Diphtheria. 57 of these children were between the ages of 5 and 15 years, and 109 under school age.

SECTION C.**SANITARY ADMINISTRATION.**

Owing to the increasing volume of work entailed in the administration of the Council's "Points" Scheme for re-housing, the management of the existing housing estates and the supervision of maintenance and repair work, it was found to be impossible to carry out the necessary routine inspections of factories, shops, bakehouses, restaurants, etc., during the year, and the time devoted to sanitary inspection was confined entirely to urgent work, complaints, nuisances and the inspection and sampling of food.

A report upon the staffing of the Public Health and Housing Department was submitted to the Council in November and it was resolved to appoint an additional Sanitary Inspector who would also act as assistant Housing Manager.

Summary of Inspections.**(1) General Sanitation.**

Bakehouses	2
Drainage	125
Fried fish chops	1
Petroleum premises	6
Rats and mice	8
Refuse disposal	3
River pollution	69
Samples of Sewage Works effluent taken	19
Samples of sludge and humus taken	6
Samples of river water taken	7
Smoke observations...	6
Stables and piggeries	2
Tents, vans and sheds	4
Water supply	3
Miscellaneous	62

(2) Housing.**Under Public Health Acts—**

Number of houses inspected	19
Additional visits paid to above houses	22

Under Housing Acts—

Number of houses inspected	29
Additional visits paid to above houses	42

Overcrowding—

Number of houses inspected	253
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Verminous premises—

Number of houses inspected	5
Houses disinfested	5
Additional visits paid to above houses	28

Miscellaneous house inspections	26
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(3) Infectious Disease.

Inquiries in cases of Infectious Disease	...	25
Visits <i>re</i> disinfection	...	26
Miscellaneous visits	...	34

(4) Meat and other Foods.*Inspection of Food.*

Visits to shops and stalls	...	58
Other visits	...	3

General Inspections

Butchers	}58 as shown above
Fishmongers			
Grocers			
Cowsheds	19
Dairies and Milkshops	20
Ice Cream premises and Vendors	22
Restaurants	1
Street vendors and hawkers	1

Sampling and visits in connection therewith.

Milk—Bacteriological	...	113
Water—Chemical	...	3
Ice cream—Bacteriological	...	6
Canned food—Bacteriological	...	8
Canned food—Chemical	...	8
Miscellaneous food visits	...	29

1. GENERAL SANITATION**(a) Drainage.**

The total quantity of sewage treated at the Sewage Works was 210,984,821 gallons, compared with 208,180,100 gallons in 1946.

The rainfall was 19.53 inches compared with 31.72 in 1946.

An increased charge for cesspool emptying was made by the Council's contractors in March and it was therefore found necessary to charge £2 8s. 0d. per emptying. This increase, combined with continued pressure by the Department, resulted in the connection of six premises to the main sewer during the year.

The Council bear the cost of one emptying of a cesspool each year for premises that are not within reasonable distance of the Council's sewers.

All alterations, adaptations and repairs to existing drainage systems are supervised by the Public Health Department.

(b) FACTORIES ACT, 1937.

1.—Inspections for purposes of provisions as to health.

Premises (1)	Number on Register (2)	Number of		
		Inspections (3)	Written notices (4)	Occupiers prosecuted (5)
(i) Factories in which Sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 are to be enforced by Local Authorities ...	13	Nil	Nil	Nil
(ii) Factories not included in (i) to which Section 7 applies— (a) Subject to the Local Authorities (Transfer of Enforcement) Order 1938 (b) Others	55	Nil	Nil	Nil
(iii) Other Premises under the Act (excluding out-workers' premises)
TOTAL	68	Nil	Nil	Nil

(c) Rats and Mice (Destruction) Act, 1919

The Hertfordshire County Council continued to operate a rodent control scheme in the district owing to the fact that delegation of powers to this authority had been refused after application had been made in 1946.

Complaints of infestation were forwarded to the County Council for attention but no action was taken to check the work carried out or to make surveys of infested property as the Department had no power to take action against defaulting owners and occupiers.

Careful supervision of the Council's Depôts and sewers was maintained during the year and infestation at the Sewage Works was controlled by the Works Manager.

PUBLIC SEWERS

Previous test and maintenance treatments had revealed that certain parts of the area continued to be free from infestation and in the treatments carried out during the year particular attention was paid to the areas known to be continually or intermittently infested.

First maintenance treatment, January 1947 :—

Total number of manholes	...	450 approx.
Number tested	...	128
Number showing prebait takes	.	8
Consecutive baiting with zinc phosphide/sausage rusk. Estimated kill ..		70 rats

Second maintenance treatment, April 1947 :—

Number of manholes tested	...	68
Number showing prebait takes	...	—
Consecutive baiting with bread	...	

This result was highly satisfactory and indicated an absence of infestation at the 68 points tested.

(d) River Pollution.

Numerous complaints were made during the year of the condition of the River Lee and it became increasingly apparent that the effluent from the Luton Sewage Works was causing serious pollution of the river. The pollution was of a continuing and not of an intermittent nature and all water weed was destroyed and fish life became extinct. A once clear chalk stream became a brown lifeless channel

covered in decomposing sewage material and silted up with sludge and humus.

A conference was convened, by the Harpenden U.D.C., of the local authorities affected by the pollution (*viz.* Harpenden and Welwyn Garden City U.D.C.'s and Hatfield and St. Albans R.D.C's), members of the Hertfordshire County Council for the areas concerned and representatives of Lord Salisbury, Lord Brocket and the Welwyn Garden City Co. Ltd.

Grave concern was voiced as to the condition of the river and the danger to health arising from the pollution and it was resolved to approach the Minister of Health for advice and assistance in the matter and to press the Lee Conservancy Board to take action against the Luton Corporation.

Two conferences were held at the Ministry of Health and it was reported that certain measures had been taken by the Luton Corporation calculated to improve the working of the Sewage Works and the quality of the effluent discharged. It was emphasised however that although every advice and action was being taken by the Minister's technical staff, it would be impossible for an immediate improvement to result and that shortage of the necessary plant and labour was a deterrent to the completion and satisfactory operation of the newly constructed works. Arrangements were made whereby the Water Pollution Research Board of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research were asked to investigate certain aspects of the treatment of the Sewage at Luton and to recommend any improvements that would result in a more satisfactory effluent.

The volume of effluent exceeds that of the river by eight to ten times on an average flow and it is therefore even more essential that the Royal Commission standard should be regarded as a minimum rather than a maximum target in this instance. Analyses revealed that the effluent failed to pass the prescribed standard in many instances in 1947.

Consequent upon the complete silting up of Brocket Lake, Lord Brocket instructed his Solicitors to issue a writ against the Luton Corporation and the whole matter then became *sub judice* and further action by the local and other authorities concerned was postponed.

The highly nitrogenous nature of the river encouraged the breeding of mosquitoes and there was a serious nuisance to residents at Batford. It was therefore decided to attempt some form of control although it was realised that any treatment would have little residual effect owing to the movement of the water.

Batford Mill pond and silted up backwaters were sprayed on the surface with 5 per cent D.D.T. in Kerosene and a mixture of D.D.T. powder and road dust was sifted along the banks and rushes. Encouraging results were obtained and periodical treatments were carried out during the breeding season. Larvæ were destroyed in large numbers and officials of the Ministry's Malaria Laboratory at Horton Hospital gave valuable advice and co-operation and typed various specimens sent for examination.

(e) Smoke nuisances.

Statutory action was contemplated by the Council against one factory in the area which was causing a smoke nuisance.

The owners made every endeavour to remedy the unsatisfactory conditions and expert advice was given by the Ministry of Fuel and Power.

The lack of an adequate and constant supply of suitable fuel, together with a lack of skilled and willing labour did much to aggravate the nuisance. Stoking demonstrations were arranged and new staff recruited and there was a decided improvement towards the end of the year.

(f) Verminous Premises.

Five houses were investigated containing vermin and, without prejudice to powers given under the Public Health Act, 1936, disinfestation treatment on a rechargeable basis was carried out for the respective owners by the Sanitary Inspector's Department.

An applicant from the Council's waiting list was selected for rehousing and was found to be verminous. Disinfestation of the furniture, clothing and effects of the whole family was carried out in transit and the new tenant was asked to contribute half of the cost of the operation.

It was found necessary to apply under Section 85 of the Public Health Act, 1936 for an Order for Removal of two aged persons who were living in filthy conditions in a heavily infested cottage and who refused to move temporarily of their own accord.

The Court made an Order for 7 days detention at Osterhills Hospital and whilst the occupiers were cleansed the cottage was disinfested.

It was necessary to destroy all beds, bedding and padded furniture in accordance with authority given under Section 84 of the Act and the cottage was completely stripped, disinfested twice and completely redecorated before occupation could be resumed.

Completely satisfactory results were obtained by the use of D.D.T. of varying strengths in Kerosene solutions and "Cimex" gaseous fumigations.

(g) Water Supply.

The public supply is provided by the Harpenden Water Company from bore holes situate at East Hyde and Shakespeare Road and both quality and quantity have been satisfactory during the year.

Complaints were received during the year of the apparent high chlorine content of the water, but the Company were not prepared to cease treatment without specific instructions by the Ministry of Health, owing to the possible risk of contamination from the River Lee.

It was found that in no instance was the complaint repeated and that the case could invariably be traced to a "building up" of concentration in a certain part of a main for a short period; once the supply was turned on the smell and/or taste disappeared.

2.—HOUSING.

Number of new houses erected during the year :—

(a) By the Local Authority	40
Actual number of dwellings	52
(b) By private enterprise	35

1. Inspection of Dwelling Houses during the year.

(1) (a) Total number of dwelling houses inspected for housing defects (under Public Health or Housing Acts)	48
(b) Number of inspections made for the purpose	112
(2) (a) Number of dwelling houses (included under sub-head (1) above) which were inspected and recorded under the Housing (Consolidated) Regulations, 1925	20
(b) Number of inspections made for the purpose	35

(3)	Number of dwelling houses found to be in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation	1
(4)	Number of dwelling houses (exclusive of those referred to under the preceding sub-head) found not to be in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation	45

2. Remedy of Defects during the year without service of Formal Notice.

Number of defective dwelling houses rendered fit in consequence of informal action by the Local Authority or their officers...	...	27
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3. Action under Statutory Powers during the year.

A.—Proceedings under Sections 9, 10 and 16 of the Housing Act, 1936 :—

(1)	Number of dwelling houses in respect of which notices were served requiring repairs	...	3
(2)	Number of dwelling houses which were rendered fit after service of Formal Notice :		
(a)	By owners	...	1
(b)	By Local Authority in default of owners	...	—

B.—Proceedings under Public Health Acts :—

(1)	Number of dwelling houses in respect of which notices were served requiring defects to be remedied	6
(2)	Number of dwelling houses in which defects were remedied after service of Formal Notices :			
(a)	By owners	2
(b)	By Local Authority in default of owners	1

It was only possible to inspect houses following specific complaints during the year. A growing tendency was observed for tenants to approach the Sanitary Inspector in connection with defects before asking the person responsible to attend to the matter. Frequent delays and set-backs were experienced by willing landlords in the execution of specified repairs and statutory action was only resorted to after it was apparent that compliance with reasonable requirements was not forthcoming.

Generally the condition of working class property in the district is above average, but there are several blocks of obsolescent cottages that must be scheduled for clearance so soon as the housing shortage is alleviated.

It was necessary to close one cottage after vacation as the Council were satisfied that it could not be rendered fit at a reasonable expense. As this property was one of a block of seven that were in a very poor structural condition, an approach was made to the owners as to their probable future action with regard to the terrace as a whole. It was learned that the owners would like to dispose of the property and the Council immediately seized the opportunity to acquire the row of cottages—after notifying the Ministry of Health and negotiations with the District Valuer—with a view to demolition as soon as circumstances permit. In the meantime the property is controlled by the Department and maintained in a weather-proof condition and steps will be taken to rehouse the occupants in due course. It is felt that this is an excellent method of dealing with property of this type and negotiations had commenced at the end of the year for the acquisition of four cottages adjoining those already purchased.

2287 inspections, interviews and visits were made during the year in connection with housing management. All applicants are interviewed at their homes and their accommodation inspected before they are allocated a Council house or flat.

The time necessarily devoted to interviews by the Sanitary Inspector/Housing Manager was considerable but it is felt that one can at least assure an applicant that his case is understood and appreciated and that full consideration will be given to the facts placed before the Housing Committee. No applicant who has specifically asked, has been refused a personal interview—unfortunately there are a small minority who abuse this rule and endeavour to gain priority by sheer persistence and continual attendance and unnecessary enquiry at the office.

A vacated Army camp consisting of Nissen huts was occupied by "Squatters" at the end of 1946. The requisition was transferred to the Council and the camp is managed by the Department. The huts were adapted and electricity was provided for heat and light, but water and sanitary conveniences were only available in communal huts. The Council at first undertook the cleansing and maintenance of the communal sanitary conveniences, but were of the opinion that this work should be carried out by the occupiers of the camp. A rota

was arranged but gradually lapsed and the condition of the conveniences consequently deteriorated. As it was felt that apart from the repair of actual defects the cleansing of the sanitary conveniences was the responsibility of the individual occupiers, the Council could not help further in the matter if this attention was neglected. The huts are poor structurally and are at the end of their useful life, constant attention being necessary to maintain them in a weatherproof condition. The majority of the occupiers qualify for rehousing by the Council and several were allocated houses during the year.

Ninety-six families were rehoused during the year but there has been no substantial decrease in the waiting list owing to the influx of newcomers to the list.

Eleven cases of statutory overcrowding on the pre-war Council house estate were abated during the year either by transfers to larger houses or the rehousing of married sons or daughters living with their parents.

3.—INFECTIOUS DISEASE.

Twenty houses were disinfected by formalin spray and vapour during the year.

4.—MEAT AND OTHER FOODS INSPECTION

(a) Meat Inspection.

All home-killed meat consumed in the District is slaughtered and inspected under the Ministry of Food Centralised Slaughtering Scheme at Luton.

169-lbs. of Australian Beef, 449-lb. of Argentine Beef, 60-lbs. of home-killed Beef, 55-lbs. Bacon and 36 $\frac{3}{4}$ -lbs. of meat preparations were condemned as being unfit for human consumption.

(b) Food Inspection.

The following food stuffs were condemned as being unfit for human consumption and destruction or salvage was arranged :—

Biscuits	45-lbs.
Cake	18-lbs.
Cake Mixtures	24-lbs.
Cereals	40-lbs.
Cheese	10 $\frac{3}{4}$ -lbs.
Confectionery	44-lbs.
Eggs, dried	4 packets
Fish, canned	73 cans
Fish, wet	270-lbs.
Fruit, canned	36 cans
Fruit, fresh	32-lbs.
Fruit, dried	25-lbs.
Jam	74 cans and jars
Milk, evaporated and condensed	307 cans
Pickle	3 jars
Soup	4 packets
Sweets	44-lbs.
Tea	25-lbs.
Vegetables	94 cans.

(c) Milk Supplies.

There are, in the Harpenden Urban District, two producer retailers of ungraded milk registered with the local authority and three producers of Tuberculin Tested Milk registered with the County Council. There are seven registered dairies, five registered cow-keepers and twenty-one registered milk retailers.

There is one pasteurising plant in the District owned and operated by a Farmers' Society who send their milk for treatment, with one exception, from farms outside the District. This firm holds a Principal Licence to retail Pasteurised Milk in the District, and two other firms retail Pasteurised Milk under Supplementary Licences.

Heat Treated Milk is sold by two retailers and is obtained from outside Harpenden.

Constant supervision of the supplies was maintained during the year and periodical sampling carried out. The County Council, as the Licensing Authority, take samples of Tuberculin Tested Milk for examination. School milk is sampled by both the County Council and the Local Authority.

The following samples were taken during the year :—

Type of Milk	Number examined	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Ungraded	30	22	8
Heat Treated	36	30	6
Pasteurised	30	26	4
Tuberculin Tested ...	17	17	0
	113	95	18

The following samples were taken by the County Council during the year :—

Tuberculin Tested ...	14	9	5
School (Pasteurised) ...	5	3	2
	19	12	7

(d) Public Health (Meat) Regulations, 1924, Article 21

It was found necessary to follow up several complaints during the year of unsatisfactory handling and transport of meat between the wholesale depôts and retail premises.

Shortage of suitable vehicles is the primary cause of overloading and consequent bad handling and it is to be hoped that this position will improve in the near future.

In the meantime a close check is kept on deliveries to the district and any contravention of the Regulations is reported immediately to the responsible authority. It has not been considered necessary to recommend legal action.

(e) Ice Cream.

There were thirteen registered retailers of this commodity during 1947, three of whom manufacture their own supply.

Before the coming into force of the Ice Cream (Heat Treatment) Regulations, 1947 on May 1st the three manufacturers had already undertaken to heat treat the ice cream and had produced very satisfactory results. Several small pasteurisers came on to the market during the year and it was understood that apparatus satisfying the requirements of the Regulations and of the Department would be acquired as soon as possible.

The difficulty of control of the sale of ice cream arose with the seasonal influx of hawkers from adjoining large towns. Constant supervision was necessary to ensure that reasonable hygienic precautions were observed, but the Department was definitely not satisfied with the handling of loose ice cream from exposed handcarts. The absence of soap, towels and washing facilities, the use of filthy utensils and the habit of smoking whilst serving was noted continually during the season. Revocation of the licence was impossible as the registration applied in another area where the factory or premises was doubtless quite satisfactory. In my opinion this is a serious defect in the law and requires amendment.

At the close of the season a report was submitted to the Council and it was resolved to place the following interpretation upon Article 5 of the Heat Treatment Regulations as from January 12th, 1948, in an endeavour to control the sale of ice cream from barrows and handcarts in the district :—

1. All barrows, handcarts, etc., shall be roofed over with side screens, leaving front and back open for serving.
2. Biscuit containers shall be covered.
3. Utensils shall be kept in water which shall be frequently changed.
4. Soap, towel and water shall be provided on the barrow for use by the vendor.

Article 5 of the Ice Cream (Heat Treatment) Regulations, 1947, provides that :—

“Ice Cream shall be protected from dirt, dust or other
“contamination at all times during its manufacture, storage
“and DISTRIBUTION, and all apparatus and utensils
“brought into contact with ice cream during its manu-
“facture, storage or DISTRIBUTION shall be
“thoroughly cleansed immediately after use and shall be
“kept clean at all times.”

